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Senate toughens spy protection bill

By David Rogers
Globe Staff

WASHINGTON - The CIA, after a critical vote in the Senate yesterday, is near victory in its efforts to make it a crime for any person, including a journalist, to reveal the identity of agents operating under cover abroad.

On a 55-39 roll call, the Senate adopted CIA-supported language intended to make it easier to prosecute violators. Final approval of the legislation is expected today.

The House already has adopted a bill with the same language. Given the size of the vote in the Senate yesterday, opponents conceded any further resistance was unlikely.

The bill has been condemned by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and publishing and broadcasting associations, who fear it will have a chilling effect on the press. "This amendment is a clear signal that the First Amendment is in deep trouble in the Senate," said John Shattuck, director of the Washington office of the ACLU.

The legislation would make it a crime for reporters or private citizens to reveal the identity of an intelligence agent, even if the information came from nonclassified sources. It calls for fines of up to

\$15,000 and imprisonment for up to three years for violations.

In the case of present or former government employees who violate the law as the result of having access to classified information, more severe penalties would be imposed - up to \$50,000 in fines and up to 10 years in prison - but the debate has centered almost exclusively on the issue of free press.

The drive for such legislation began in the mid-1970s. It gained momentum in the last Congress and has been actively promoted since then by the Reagan Administration. Vice President George Bush, a former director of the CIA, had called senators to lobby for their support, and 41 of the 55 votes for the amendment came from Republican members.

The thrust of the bill is to make it possible for the government to prosecute a relative handful of people who have systematically published lists of undercover agents with the avowed purpose of impeding foreign intelligence operations. Philip Agee, a former CIA agent, and Louis Wolf, editor of the Covert Action Information Bulletin, are two targets frequently mentioned in debate. To achieve this goal,

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